



Testimony of ConnCAN
Subira Gordon, Executive Director
Education Committee Public Hearing
March 8, 2023

Testimony Regarding: SB1, SB1164, SB1165 & HB6842

Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Currey, Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative McCrary, and members of the Education Committee, my name is Subira Gordon and I am the Executive Director for ConnCAN, a statewide education advocacy organization focused on equitable solutions for our kids.

Today, I'm here to speak in general support of SB1 with some recommended additions, SB1164, SB1165 and HB6842.

Regarding SB1

ConnCAN applauds the Senate for prioritizing transparency and accountability for Connecticut's education system, specifically in the world of finance and public funds.

ConnCAN believes that SB1 can become even more impactful with some specific and notable additions.

With over \$1B going to school districts through the American Rescue Plan, the public should have a concrete understanding of how those funds impacted student outcomes. Right now, the State Department of Education has a high-quality e-grant system where districts upload their budgets and narratives for how the plan to spend grant funds. However, without a follow up for outcomes reporting, the public has no way of knowing how their tax dollars improved outcomes for students. We believe that by implementing an outcomes-based grant reporting cycle, especially for ESSER funds, Connecticut will be better positioned to learn from this once-in-a-generation infusion of capital.

We look forward to working with you to help districts report finances in a uniform manner.

Regarding SB1164

ConnCAN supports the periodic review of regulations related to education. The current educator certification regulations are a quarter century old, and much has changed since that time. The State Department of Education has made changes to certification, but the regulations could better align with statute and the latest trends and changes to the education sector.

ConnCAN looks forward to being a part of this conversation and applauds the education committee for making this work a priority.

Regarding SB1165

Research shows that just 1 in 5 students have basic financial literacy skills. Additionally, as the cost of higher education skyrockets, 1 million students default on their loan debt, and the average student has over \$29,000 in debt ([NYT](#)).

Financial literacy is a necessary skill for the 21st Century.

Right now, 15 states require financial literacy to graduate high school. According to the center for Financial Literacy at Champlain College, Connecticut gets an F for its policies in helping support financial literacy in students ([CFL](#))

Connecticut must step up to ensure that students are ready to manage their finances in adulthood. And, while 90% of CT high schools offer a financial literacy course, less than 7% of students are required to take the course for graduation ([JUMP\\$TART](#)).

Connecticut's young people are expected to survive in the adult world with little understanding of finances. For their sake, this must change.

Financial management and literacy are key elements to financial independence. We must keep in mind that supporting financial literacy without addressing underlying economic inequality, will not solve our collective problem. We must acknowledge that better counting the few dollars and cents folks have will not ensure that they'll be able to gain more economic wealth later in life.

Only a world-class education and equitable policies can do that.

Regarding HB6842

High-quality foods fuel the brain. In February, Connecticut passed an emergency certification to ensure that all students could attend school with full bellies, ready to learn. However, where our work falls short is ensuring the food is high-quality, universally enjoyed by students, and locally-sourced. HB6842 creates an incentive structure for school districts to offer locally-sourced foods. This supports local farmers, encourages greater understanding of where food comes from, and increases equity.

ConnCAN is happy to answer any questions the committee may have and we thank you for your time.